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ABSTRACT

A study examined a group of Israeli teacher educators who met to develop a new integrative curriculum, investigating characteristics of the curriculum development process and of the planning group as a professional discourse community. Data sources included transcripts of 26 conferences throughout the year, participant interviews, and participant journals. Overall, the group evolved as a professional discourse community, displaying features such as supportive shared leadership; shared vision and values; collective creativity; de-privatized practice; focus on student learning; and reflective dialogue. Outcomes for participants and the organization supported the contention that training-on-the-job that moves from practice to theory and back to practice and occurs in group context is gaining dominance in teacher training. The integrative curriculum-development-in-action process was new for most participants, and it generated knowledge construction leading to changes in practice. There were conflicts between teachers' visions of the group's role and the experts' visions of group goals. The community of learners provided support for teachers, helping them make personal decisions at various stages of the process in respect to many issues. The process significantly enhanced the autonomy of some while causing anxiety to those who had difficulty adapting to required flexibility, dynamic changes, and commitment. Contains 19 references. (SM)

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Constructing a professional community of teacher educators during a curriculum-in-action process

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Introduction

During the last two decades, one of the main issues in teacher education has been teacher learning. The focus has shifted from the solitary learner, who develops professionally through in-service courses, to professional growth within a group and to collaboration among the participants. In other words, the basic unit of learning has become the group rather than the individual learner (Sange, 1995).

It is common knowledge that in teacher education colleges, there are distinctive boundaries between subject matter specialists and pedagogical tutors[1], a pattern which emphasizes the gap between theory and practice (Hargreaves, 1994). Teacher educators identify personally with their own domains, and these distinct domains invariably compete with one another. This gap results in incoherence within training programs and places the burden for integrating the subjects studied and the practicum on the student teachers.

In recent years, teacher education colleges have been attempting to blur the boundaries between subject matter specialists and the pedagogical tutors in various ways. Modern conceptions of knowledge (both theoretical and practical) and new insights into teaching and learning have made curriculum development central to the agenda.

In order to respond to the challenges and the needs of the postmodern epoch of educational change, researchers recommend that educational organizations should establish a professional context for teachers by constructing communities of learners. These would allow teachers to work in collaboration with their peers and result in personal and professional growth (Louis & Kruse, 1995; Hord, 1997). A great deal has been written on professional communities of learners in the area of business administration and educational leadership. This learner community approach is compatible with recently accumulated knowledge on teachers' professional development. This new knowledge emphasizes that change and growth occur during action: while actively practicing teaching, reflecting on the action, becoming aware of essential aspects and designing alternative methods of action (Sergiovanni, 1996; Korthagen & Kessles, 1999).

The curricular activity described in this paper emerged against the backdrop of curricular concerns arising in Israel in the last two decades. Among these concerns are issues of external or internal curriculum design (Ben-Peretz, 1995); pre-planned curriculum or curriculum-in-action (Ariav, 1996); and interdisciplinary curriculum vs. subject-matter curriculum **(Levin and Nevo, 1997)**.

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[1]A pedagogical tutor is a teacher who supervises the student teachers' practicum in the schools and helps them to interwine practice into theory.

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The college-based curricular activity described here was designed as "curriculum-development-in-action" where participants develop their personal and professional knowledge through ongoing activity and reconstruct the curriculum accordingly. "The knowledge that evolves is knowledge that is socially negotiated through the process of conversation itself" (Applebee, 1996: 40). The main features of college-based curriculum design are collaboration and shared knowledge (Gibton, 1997). This paper describes a group of teacher educators who initially formed a working group with the aim of designing an integrative, interdisciplinary, curriculum and evolved into a community of professional learners in course of curriculum planning which became "curriculum-development-in action".

Review of literature

A new paradigm for teacher professional development is beginning to emerge (Stein, Smith and Silver, 1999). This new paradigm is has been referred to as a professional learning community (Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell & Valentine, 1999). It incorporates various learning experiences that are more in-action, on-action and for-action rather than pre-action as was accepted in the past (Cochran-Smith, 1999; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). It also incorporates a new approach to teachers' learning. The new approach indicates a shift from the solitary learner, who obtains knowledge from in-service training courses, to learning within a community of learners (Louis, Marks & Kruse, 1996; Stein, Smith & Silver, 1999). This knowledge derives from practice and gradually transforms into theory (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Shoenfeld, 1999).

Communities of learners are defined as "collections of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together bounded to a set of shared ideas and ideals" (Sergiovanni, 1996: 48). Members join with others who have similar intentions. Instead of relying on external control measures, communities rely more on norms, purposes, values, professional socialization, collegiality, and natural interdependence. As community connections become established in schools, they become substitutes for formal systems of supervision, evaluation, and staff development (Scribner et al., 1999).

Collaboration has come to comprise a meta-paradigm of educational and organizational change in the postmodern age. In the context of restructuring and of educational improvement, this collaborative solution embodies many or all of the following principles: Moral support, improved effectiveness, reduced overload, synchronized time perspectives, situated certainty, political assertiveness, increased capacity for reflection, organizational responsiveness, opportunities to learn, and continuous improvement (Hargreaves, 1994).

Within communities, empowerment focuses less on individual rights, discretion, and freedom, and more on commitment, obligation, and duties that people feel toward each other and toward the school. Community members are connected by such moral aspects as mutual obligations, shared traditions, and normative ties, so that collegiality is something that comes from within (Sergiovanni, 1996). Whole-school curriculum development, change and commitment to missions and visions of educational purpose are the symbols and realizations of this process (Hargreaves, 1994). To be a member of a "whole school" is to aspire to belong to a community, to share the same educational beliefs and aims, to work together as a team, to acknowledge and activate the complementary expertise of colleagues, to relate well to other members of the group, and to be aware of and involved in classes beyond one's own (Nias et al., 1992).

Lambert et al. (1996) propose that conditions for self-motivation, learning and development of intelligence are not fostered in machine-like hierarchical systems, because these factors challenge the status quo. They propose an ecological model of school organization, which recognizes and builds on relations between people and their environments. They view staff culture as a reflection of the norms, beliefs and values of the community. Understanding this culture is the prerequisite for the development of learning communities. The nature of relationships among the staff members sets the tone for the school. Students are more likely to be motivated and engaged in schools where the staff is energetic and positive, shares goals, and openly demonstrates caring for others. Among the elements that make up staff culture are beliefs about one another; the way the staff works (or doesn't work) together; students; the community and the fundamental purpose of the school.

Heron (1996) defines a cooperative group as a community of value with value premises as its foundation. He refers to three primary stages, each with a different emotional climate, through which an effective cooperative group moves: The first stage is one of safety and inclusion; the second, of difference and disagreement; and the third, of authentic collaboration among respected individuals. Persons are only manifested in their equal and reciprocal relations with others in the context of mutual communion and communication, in which those involved function as free, autonomous beings in loving, creative and intelligent dialogue and collaborative endeavor.

Participation in a professional community helps to shape the community into a discourse community. Language enables participants to symbolize their personal experiences and communicate them to each other by the use of its general terms and concepts (Scribner et al., 1999). Language, which as a medium of communication is necessarily public and shared, is ultimately validated by interpersonal experiential knowing. It is a collective product whose primary locutions are collegial: "we", "our language", "our world", "our reality" (Heron, 1996).

Professional communities operate within organizations. Therefore, organizational learning has been posited as a process that can lead to a second order change, which is the result of critical evaluation of the underlying values and assumptions that guide behavior (Rait, 1995, cited in Scribner et al., 1999). **Curriculum plays a major role in the organizational structure of the school, especially in light of the significant changes which are occurring in the social and educational environments within which schools function. Through curricular deliberation, teachers take part in decision-making, essential in a modern school (Gibton, 1997).**

The study

This study investigated a group of teachers in a teacher training college in Israel, who initially gathered to develop a new integrative curriculum in the college. The group consisted of fourteen staff members, from various areas of expertise. Six were pedagogical tutors, members of the elementary school department at the college. Other members were two experts in the teaching of mathematics, two experts in the teaching of literature, an expert in the teaching of literacy and a teacher of psychology. The leading team who initiated the project, included the head of the elementary school department who initiated the planning process, a literacy expert who served as the head of the literacy center in the college and a

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curriculum expert who was the head of the curriculum-planning center. The declared goals of the group were: (a) to construct a common language within the professional community of teachers, in order to bring about a reflective dialogue on major topics in teacher education, and remove the barriers between the different departments; and (b) to develop an interdisciplinary "curriculum- in-action" in order to help teachers reconstruct their knowledge and improve the student teachers' learning by viewing the separate subjects they study in a more holistic and critical manner.

The method of inquiry used to conduct the investigation of professional community and curriculum-development-in-action was constructivist (Scribner et al., 1999). This method is consistent with the qualitative research paradigm.

The research questions were:

1. What are the characteristics of the curriculum-development process?
2. What are the characteristics of the planning group as a professional discourse community?

Data sources and procedures

Data collection began at the beginning of the planning sessions in October, 1998 and continued through June, 1999 when the school year ended. Data was gathered from multiple sources including recordings and transcripts of the 26 conferences which took place throughout the school year. Two interviews were conducted with each participant, one at the end of the school year and the second six months later, in the middle of the 1999-2000 school year. Personal journals were collected from some of the participants.

Data analysis

Content analysis was used to uncover clear themes. The analytic procedure included open and axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) which resulted in rich evidence for the two main components of the study, the curriculum process component and the discourse component.

The three researchers analyzed the same data independently and validated the analysis by reaching agreement on the different categories. An external judge provided additional reliability of the analysis.

Roles of the researchers

The three researchers were part of the professional community who developed a curriculum-in-action and adopted the qualitative approach of participant observers. The data was collected by an external observer who recorded and transcribed all the conferences. The researchers conducted the interviews, including interviews with one another in order to acquire all points of view and gain thick data.

Curriculum planning in, on and for action – Components and aspects

The creation of a professional community of teachers took place over the course of a single school year in which the group was involved in the process of integrative curriculum development-in-action. This was itself a process-in-action, as it changed continually in response to the input of the participants regarding the planning-in-action, and the implementation that followed planning-on-action. Some of the activities also included planning-for-action, in the sense that the group constantly considered future programs in the wake of decisions taken, what happened in the field, and insights gained. Curriculum development was a recursive process that continually repeated itself, displaying three major components: goals, decision making, and reflection. Each of these components contained two aspects: substance, i.e., the content and meaning of the discourse; and syntax, with both an explicit level in respect to information management, the manner of curricular planning, and the nature of the interaction between the participants, and an implicit level reflecting intra- and interpersonal conflicts in respect to the issues at hand.

Table 1 presents the curriculum planning in, on, and for action in the professional discourse community, which also proved to be a professional community of learners. The curriculum development components appear horizontally, and the curricular discourse aspects vertically.

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Below is a discussion of each of the curricular components, its two aspects, and the explicit and implicit levels, along with illustrative examples.

Goals

The discourse community conducted debates of goals and concepts throughout the process. Although the early sessions clearly centered around these issues, they were not determined at this stage and continued to feature in their discussions, as we shall see below.

Substance

The goals for which the discourse community had been formed were presented to the group orally and in writing by the project initiator, who was the head of the elementary school department, at the very first meeting. They were as follows:

- To conduct a dialogue and create a common language between the teachers of the different subjects at the college and the pedagogical and methodological tutors;
- To construct an integrative curriculum-in-action;
- To apply academic literacy across the curriculum;
- To demonstrate teaching methods and alternative assessment in lessons at the college;
- To develop a differential attitude toward students;
- To conduct a joint study of the process undergone by the discourse community.

Early sessions focused mainly on the central goals: creation of a discourse community, academic literacy and its integration in the various disciplines, and the nature of an integrative curriculum. Here the participants clarified for themselves the meaning and underlying rationale of the goals, and their connection to the conceptual world of each of the individuals in the group. For example, the following dialogue took place between the literacy expert and a literature teaching tutor on the question of a preliminary examination/diagnostic/paper designed to assess the initial concepts with which the students come to the course:

> *Literacy expert: Test whatever you want in your subject.*
> *Literature teaching tutor: You're opposed to a preliminary exam, but I want to give one.*
> *Literacy expert: Check whether she [a student] has literary comprehension in the field of literature teaching. That's a matter of your subject.*
> *Literature teaching tutor: But it also has to do with some sort of literacy...*
> *Pedagogical tutor: You want to start with a test in your field?*
> *Literature teaching tutor: Yes, I want to see how well the students can comprehend a text for children, so that I don't find myself in a situation where I suddenly realize they don't have the slightest understanding of what the text says.*
> *Literacy expert: I fully support you in that.*
> *Literature teaching tutor: It's very important to me to hear that.*
> *Literacy expert: You have to keep your finger on the pulse at all times, that's the only way you'll get anywhere with them. But don't call it a test. Give them a diagnostic, some kind of preliminary paper...*

This example reveals two distinct perceptions of assessment, literacy, initial concepts, etc.

During the initial stage of clarifying goals and concepts, a collective decision-making process was also taking place. The group made two determinations: a. the term "conflict" would be the theme around which the integrative curriculum would be organized; and 2. the students would be tutored for an integrative project by several teachers from different disciplines working in collaboration.

The subject of goals came up in virtually every session, each time raised by different participants. Each such occasion generated renewed discussion of the importance of one goal or another from the standpoint of one of the teachers, and the cruciality and manner of achieving that goal, as well as additional goals not originally stated. For instance, the goal of knowledge construction was not included in the original plan, but rather grew out of the dialogue, the description of practice, and the framing of new practical methods. It was discussed time and again, as was the goal of formulating methods of alternative assessment, a sub-goal of constructing an integrative curriculum.

Syntax

On the **explicit level**, syntax takes three forms: the manner of information management, the manner of curriculum development, and the nature of the interaction, that is, the way in which the participants in the discourse collaborate openly.

In the first three meetings, **information** was managed primarily by the project initiator. It was she who presented the group with the goals and the broader institutional context of the college that gave rise to the need for the professional discourse community. She was joined by the literacy expert in the second and third meetings. These two group leaders steered the process of goal clarification, demonstrated the importance of reflective thinking, and suggested a variety of ideas as patterns of activity. The first example below illustrates the way in which the literacy expert led the discussion by spelling out the planning process:

> *The prevailing approach in the world today is to work with disciplines not as separate fields... I suggest team work between the subject teachers, the literacy teachers, and the English tutors... The course can also be linked with research methods in the second year... The literacy teaching tutor will be available to advise you in the first semester... in the second semester you will take over the tutoring.*

The second example illustrates how the project initiator led the discussions by setting the agenda for the meeting and defining its goals:

> *There are so many things that have already been put off for three weeks. I suggest we start by going around the room and hearing a brief survey of what's been happening in the groups. After that we can see Sarah and Rama's film, and if we have time we'll get to the syllabus.*

On the **explicit level, curricular development** was characterized by requests for clarification and explanation of the goals and objectives that had been set, along with discussion of the character of the group, its work patterns, the rationale behind the goals, and the nature of the curriculum. In addition, the participants wished to understand the expectations from the community in general and from each of them in particular. The project initiator and literacy expert offered lengthy explanations, sought to arrive at clear understandings and dispel uncertainties, and gave legitimacy to each question.

The **implicit level** in the discussion of goals was expressed differently. Each participant ranked the goals for herself in order of her personal priorities, and accordingly adopted those that seemed most significant and relevant to her particular subject. This was a consequence of the differential translation each group member gave to the various goals and the differential emphasis placed on them in the course of curriculum construction.

Decision Making

This component was observed virtually throughout the process in the form of knowledge construction. Its substance centered around critical issues that were raised, and, as with goals, its syntax again displayed an explicit and an implicit level.

Substance

Curricular knowledge construction and decision making focused on four critical issues that sprang from the goals: the nature of the integrative curriculum, academic literacy and its integration into the disciplines, alternative assessment, and the meaning of

knowledge construction. The first two appear in the goals as presented at the start of the process. The latter two were added by participants in the community as a result of the discourse and implementation.

Thus, the discussion centered around three critical curricular issues stemming from the goals. As a matter of course, the first was the integrative curriculum itself. The group was asked to change its way of thinking, moving away from the **traditional disciplinary curriculum**, to which most teachers are accustomed, to an **integrative curriculum** in all its myriad forms, from interdisciplinary to super-disciplinary. Thinking and learning on these questions ranged back and forth along this continuum. The following two examples illustrate the discussion of an integrative curriculum, particularly on the part of the curriculum development expert, who repeatedly directed the group's attention to planning of this sort:

> *We can opt for octopus-type integration, in which each arm leads to one discipline, or we can opt for the opposite. It's a matter of different intensities of integration and that's one type of integration. We take a certain concept that can be dealt with significantly by each discipline and can cross disciplines when we get to the core of the work.*

or:

> *The question is whether to give everyone the same assignment or whether there's the option of your responses relating to each one individually. This brings us back to the integrator. The story of the integrator is such a personal one. A person can write one sentence that may cause her to look more deeply at something else she wrote.*

The second critical issue - the question of the product and assessment methods - derived directly from the first. Thinking on this subject ranged along a continuum from **traditional assessment** evaluating the final product, to **open flexible alternatives** assessing both the process and the product, and themselves an integral part of the process of teaching and learning. In the example below, several teachers discuss the process, the product, and its assessment:

> *Psychology teacher: If each student has to do a field project, why shouldn't I be part of it?*
> *Project initiator: Excellent.*
> *Psychology teacher: Don't you demand term papers from your students?*
> *Pedagogical tutor A: No.*
> *Pedagogical tutor B: We can include a section that applies your material and that can be your paper.*
> *Literacy expert: You're the one who determines what goes into the grade. You can decide that it's based on two papers.*
> *Mathematics teaching tutor: You don't have to give a term grade.*
> *Psychology teacher: So what's the problem? What if I give them a case study?*

A third critical issue that featured in the discussion was the question of literacy. At one end of this continuum is **literacy as expertise**, taught by experts as an autonomous discipline, and at the other end, literacy as an **integral and organic part of**

each of the disciplines taught. In the course of the sessions, a **collaborative model** between the literature teaching tutor and the literacy teaching expert was constructed. The two teachers decided to team-teach one of the courses, combining literature, methodology, and literacy throughout the entire school year. As a result of this experience, the literature teaching tutor stated:

> *I have to admit that working with the literacy teaching expert was the greatest invention ever. The students took the arrangement for granted, not as anything out of the ordinary. I take that as a compliment.*

Syntax

On the **explicit level**, the syntax here was characterized by a traditional hierarchy that gradually became a bottom-up hierarchy in regard to the flow of theoretical and practical knowledge, translating the goals into practice, collaborative interaction among the group members, and personal and collective decisions.

Thus, information management moved back and forth between a **steep pyramid** and a **flat pyramid**. At the first meetings involving decision making and knowledge construction, the experts steered the process. It was they who set the agenda and took center stage. The literacy expert explained the meaning of literacy, the literature expert presented the syllabus to the group, the curriculum development experts lectured on integrative curriculum planning, and the information conveyed to the participants was primarily **theoretical disciplinary knowledge**. On occasion, relevant information from educational research literature was presented, and the members of the group read articles on topics such as integration, collaborating with colleagues, and so on. Gradually, the group leaders were pushed to the sidelines, and each time a different teacher took center stage to raise one issue or another. The participants came to realize that they could take the lead, placing their own issues on the agenda and presenting practical experience and products. The hierarchy that had typified the early meetings became a flat pyramid in which more and more participants took the floor. Thus, in the course of the reductive process of converting theory into practice, information management changed, along with the managers.

An example of a flat pyramid in which different participants take the lead is illustrated by the following exchange:

> *Project initiator: What clearly emerges as requiring documentation...*
> *Pedagogical tutor A: Why not combine the two teams?*
> *Project initiator: It's a matter of time. My aim is to totally reorganize the schedule for next year.*
> *Pedagogical tutor A: ...On the didactic level, we can consider formulating integrative activities around a concept in order to get to the students' writing. The concept should be used as a theme stretching over our whole curriculum, and from there to go to writing that documents the activities or ideas of a team of pedagogical tutors and then write it out in an organized fashion.. The research part is very demanding, and if we want to do it, we have to do it right. If not - we have to find an alternative.*

Pedagogical tutor B: I think we're confusing the what with the how. We already have case studies that lead to didactic application... I think we should leave here with a decision. I think the heart of the material is the different types of dialogues between teachers, students, and in my opinion the literacy representatives are most suited to lead something like this... Diffusion is good, but we need someone who'll always bring us back into focus.
Project initiator: The question is if it's possible for each one to record her experience of each meeting. The question is if you can commit yourself to that kind of documentation, Ariel.
Pedagogical tutor A: Yes, of course.
Pedagogical tutor B: I am looking in my notebook, and before each meeting I prepare a different suggestion. It shows what happened in the meeting. We have to go over it each time and write down some reflection. That's exactly what I meant before. Each member of the group has to be committed. I remember at the beginning we talked about the goal of the students' writing.

A multi-headed leadership stands out here. At the start, the project initiator focuses on setting an immediate practical direction for the planning process, and then goes on to set the agenda for the meeting as well. Pedagogical tutors A and B also make immediate practical suggestions for the planning process, and pedagogical tutor A even reminds them of the principal goal for which the group was formed.

The leading team (the project initiator and the literacy and curriculum development experts) asked probing questions and responded by means of comments that aided in moving the discussion forward. Even at this stage, after the agenda for a specific session was presented, it was often changed to suit the needs of various participants or to coincide with the issues they wished to raise. For example:

Project initiator: I want to thank you for staying on despite the problems we had today. There are two parts to the program today. Last week we starting to define for ourselves the rationales, and we've got a summary of the discussion here. From the rationales, we go on to what each of you stresses in her teaching, and in the second part we'll discuss the questionnaire.
Mathematics teaching tutor: What happens if we have something to say?
Project initiator: Let's see. Should we give that fifteen minutes at the end or at the beginning?
Mathematics teaching tutor: At the beginning, naturally.
Project initiator: Okay. What do you want to say?
Mathematics teaching tutor: I want to raise two or three thoughts I've been having. They've been going through my head a lot lately, and I would like to remind you that we've always said the target population is us and not the students.

Discussion was then diverted to the subject raised by the mathematics teaching tutor, which was different from what had originally been planned for the meeting.

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Similarly, when the project initiator introduced the subject of the students' products, one of the group members expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which topics were chosen by the students and the collaborative tutoring, and this was the issue addressed in the discussion, rather than what had been planned. The participants pulled in many different directions. On the one hand, this feature turned the hierarchy into a flat pyramid, enabling a variety of people to lead and take center stage. On the other hand, however, it somewhat impeded the collective decision making process.

Flow of Theoretical and Practical Knowledge: Considerable information "flowed" into the group discourse, most of it a product of the different types of knowledge held by the participants. The decision making process evidenced a flow of **theoretical-disciplinary and practical knowledge** of two sorts, that which stemmed **from previous experience** and that which gradually took the form of practical knowledge emerging **from recent experience**. The theoretical-disciplinary knowledge was provided primarily by the various experts, whereas it was the pedagogical tutors and the teachers of the different disciplines who supplied most of the practical knowledge, initially from previous experience and later from their recent experience in putting the integrative curriculum into practice in their classrooms. For example, in the instance below the literacy expert introduced theoretical knowledge into the discussion:

> *Academic literacy is a subject matter in and of itself, with its own concepts. So it needs intense attention. On the other hand, it is not a discipline of the sort that everyone involved in it will continue on with it. If it's meant for the whole population of students and is part of the basic courses, then every teacher can deal with it in laboratory conditions as well, in the form of an intensive course. According to Vygotsky's cumulative approach, from the personal level to the student's potential level... we know that not everyone has the same potential. In the case of reading and writing abilities, you can help a person advance from one point to another point, but no further. As soon as people develop an awareness of something, it will occur to them in other situations too. Over time it can become automatic and then the individual acquires it... A lengthy study shows that a text is not a one-time thing. It undergoes processing. There is a cyclical process of thinking about writing, rewriting, etc. It's a process where I'm not all on my own, but my classmates, my colleagues, can help me...*

The literature teaching tutor, on the other hand, contributed **practical knowledge from previous experience**:

> *I want to go back to the previous question about the different working methods. My experience from the Mofet Institute is that if no one takes on the responsibility, it doesn't work. There has to be someone who agrees to take responsibility and set policy...*

In later sessions, most of the knowledge provided took the form of knowledge emerging from recent experience, as in the following examples from the psychology teacher and one of the pedagogical tutors:

Psychology teacher: There has been a definite change in the school year. We've been studying a single theory, Freud, for a whole semester. We're going into it very deeply, analyzing different cases all the time. For example, we analyzed pupils' disciplinary problems through simulation, and also worked on resolving personal conflicts.

Pedagogical tutor: I have five girls who did an integrative project, and each of them did something different. We have to consider each instance individually and draw conclusions for next year. I want to say one thing: from the three different models I tried with three tutors, we can see we all have different versions of integration. We have to find out if there's any possibility of arriving at some sort of generalization.

Translating Goals into Practice: As we have seen, the discussions centered around clarifying goals and defining and addressing the issues. At later stages of the process, personal practice and the products of the different teachers and students were presented to the group for discussion and critique. Translating the goals and theories into practice and opening practice to public scrutiny played a substantial role in the process. The participants presented examples from their own experience, and these were considered by the community, with members offering their feedback and advice and working out new practical methods together. For example:

Curriculum development expert to the psychology teacher: They [the students] enjoyed your lesson very much.
Pedagogical tutor to the psychology teacher: It was very important for them.
Literacy expert to the psychology teacher: Why don't you take it [the conflict] further? Each student can try to find out how it finds expression in theory.
Pedagogical tutor: So where's the integration? [looking out for the goal] It'll be a real problem. They're already overloaded. Every conflict has a psychological element. I have to give a grade.
Pedagogical tutor: But they've already collected material, so they can use what they've collected. I have a few students who already did that.

The meeting devoted to the idea of several teachers jointly tutoring the students demonstrated the difficulties encountered in translating theory into practice, in team-teaching, and in constructing an integrative curriculum in general. On the one hand, the participants wished to further the goals, yet on the other they discovered that actual practice, that is, the process of collaborative tutoring, is not a simple matter and reveals conflicting perceptions in respect to the nature of the integrative curriculum, the students' practice teaching, and the tutoring process itself.

Collaboration among the participants became progressively closer in the course of the discussions. It was reflected in the types of utterances used in the discourse, which came to include practical and theoretical advice, invitations to other members to take the floor, reinforcing feedback, and echoing (giving the speaker reinforcement by

describing something similar that happened to a stronger member, on the order of: "That happened to me too," or "It's the same with me").

The following conversation illustrates several forms of collaboration:

Pedagogical tutor A: Maybe we should give a joint lesson and that will be more professional in terms of the analysis.
Project initiator: I would let them [the students] do it, because it's best if they do the analysis themselves.
Psychology teacher: I can also give them an assignment to analyze something from a book.
Project initiator: Then they all get the same assignment. If you give them the same thing they'll hand in the same thing.
Pedagogical tutor B: But they [the students] have already collected material, so they can use what they've collected. I have a few students who already did that, for example. They took material from their personal lives, from the field of education, from the newspaper. I can say that the more I read these things, the more convinced I am that they'll pick and choose and won't use it all for this paper. They already have material.
Psychology teacher: So each one can select things from her file. The choice itself already defines the conflict. Do they all have a file? I think this is very high quality and more significant learning.
Project initiator: How do you feel it's significant learning?
Literacy expert: Can you put your finger on what makes it more significant?
Psychology teacher: We started the integration from the fact that they can't write a paper, and we do a lot of examples. We take and resolve a lot of things from their own world. We've done simulations and seen how the teacher should cope with it. We've translated Freud's concepts into concepts in the field. And after that we converted it to the personal level.
Pedagogical tutor B: Did the matter of control come up a lot? Didn't you stress that?
Psychology teacher: I get the impression that they [the students] take it to some personal place. They look for personal contents. It's much more interesting for them.
Literacy expert: How is it more significant than what you did before?
Psychology teacher: I allow myself to experiment more. I've convinced myself not to worry about how much I get done. Last year it was more about amassing knowledge. This year it's important to me that they understand reality differently through the perspective of the theory... I know I use a more experiential and less conceptual language... It's important to me that as future teachers as well, they understand what's happening to them, such as, why do you scream, who does it serve, and so on.
Project initiator: That's wonderful, and they even call that theory too.

Collaboration among the participants is highly evident in this excerpt. The psychology teacher is asking her colleagues for help with the paper she is going to

assign her students. The help she receives takes the form of practical suggestions, such as: "Maybe we should give a joint lesson"; reinforcing feedback, such as: "That's wonderful"; and echoing, such as: "I have a few students who already did that, for example." Also apparent in the conversation are invitations to the teacher to speak and explain herself more fully, for example: "How do you feel it's significant learning?" or "Can you put your finger on what makes it more significant?" voiced by the project initiator and literacy expert. The collaboration she receives assists the psychology teacher in constructing her knowledge to such an extent that at the end of the dialogue she has more confidence both in the type of assignment she will give her students and in her teaching methods.

Individual and Collective Decision Making: At the start of the reductive process of converting theory into practice, the group began to split up in respect to decision making, making this an individual endeavor. Thus, at this stage the discourse community became a support group for the planning decisions of each member and the rationales behind them, indicating support for the autonomy of the teacher. One of the pedagogical tutors, for instance, decided to change the syllabus of her course, considerably condensing the scope of the research question she had planned to demand of her students:

> *It caused a change in my thinking and I felt relief [referring to the literacy expert's suggestion at the previous meeting to limit the scale of the student assignment], and I decided to go with the idea of condensing it... I sensed that the girls [the students] also breathed easier. I changed the instructions [for the assignment].*

The psychology teacher decided to utterly alter her syllabus and concentrate on analyzing the students' personal conflict situations in light of specific theories, instead of "teaching" a large number of theories as she had originally planned:

> *There has been a definite change in the school year. We've been studying a single theory, Freud, for a whole semester. We're going into it very deeply, analyzing different cases all the time. For example, we analyzed pupils' disciplinary problems through simulation, and also worked on resolving personal conflicts.*

Implicit Syntax

Although the explicit discourse in the group was courteous, decorous, amiable and inviting, beneath the surface serious conflicts roiled throughout the sessions in the form of a covert discourse, or implicit syntax. The notion of "conflict," chosen as the organizing theme of the curriculum, constituted the fulcrum of the inter- and intrapersonal interaction as well. It is important to note that on certain occasions a number of the discussions were channeled to the participants' reflective thinking on the process, and it was here that the implicit level was given even greater expression than the explicit. Evidence of the implicit level is drawn from three sources: logical contradictions, both theoretical and practical, raised by the members; inferences of a fear of change or state of imbalance; and events in the classroom that produced negative results.

Interpersonal conflicts arose in respect to each of the curricular issues discussed in the course of the process: starting with the perception of the nature of knowledge, which gives rise to the way in which the nature of teaching and learning is perceived; through the teachers' mental images of teacher training, including elements of both theory and practice and the gap between them, and their conception of the job of the teacher trainer; and ending with the way they see the students and the products of teaching and learning.

The conflicting views on these issues were closely allied with the teachers' differing perceptions of knowledge, itself a subject of conflict. There were those who saw knowledge as a body of formal objective truisms formulated by authoritative sources which should therefore be relied upon, and those who viewed it as something subjective, tightly linked with the knower and the context, and gradually and continuously constructed by each individual. The perception of knowledge naturally impacts on each teacher's teaching/learning methods.

Below are two examples of conflicting views of knowledge. When the question of the organizing theme was discussed and the concept of "conflict" was chosen, the participants began clarifying its meaning for themselves. One of the teachers offered this approach:

> *We have to do research, find a lot of definitions, because each of us comprehends it differently. We have to go to the library and investigate the concepts there. Learn the concepts. People who are wiser than me have dealt with it. What does psychology say about the two concepts? I want to know what each one investigated in each field. The emphasis is different in every place.*

Another teacher presented a contrasting view:

> *What do you as a person think of the concept? I think that looking for narrow dictionary definitions misses the point. That's the nature of knowledge, it's a matter of constructing knowledge.*

One teacher's perception of knowledge here is diametrically opposed to the other's. The former conceives of it as an objective, formal, external entity, while the latter as a subjective essence closely connected to context and previous knowledge. The incident described below, in which two teachers with conflicting views and belief

systems jointly tutored a student, illustrates the complexity of the issue and the existence of the two parallel levels.

The two teachers prepared the student for a literature lesson she was to give, observed the lesson together, offered her joint feedback, and then each, separately, recorded their reflections on the process. In an interview at the end of the school year, one of the teachers remarked:

> *When I tutored a student together with another teacher, I felt we weren't speaking the same language. After half a year of practice teaching, the student said to me in a feedback session that the lesson she gave was different from her other lessons. According to her, every detail of it was mapped out in advance, and throughout the lesson she was constantly concerned with the plan, trying to get through it step by step. From my point of view, I recognized a problem here, because if we'd already succeeded in reaching the stage where the student could make an outline plan, could see that the planning process is an integral part of the teaching process without the traditional separation between them, then I realized that as a result of the collaborative tutoring she had internalized something else. She was always waiting for the pupils to give the expected answers. The collaboration conveyed mixed messages to her. From my standpoint as a pedagogical tutor, we always have an added value, we're really and truly producing something meaningfully new that didn't happen with the students before the introduction of the more open process, teaching them to listen to the children and connect with them, and that it's not such a terrible thing if you have some plan and you can't carry it out. On the contrary, they should work from the needs that the children express. The student was given two models for her work, and she had to choose. Her choice, that is the product and what was clearly conveyed, showed that she selected the other model that I don't agree with, and so I went home with a very bad feeling.*

After the lesson itself, the other teacher wrote in her reflective journal:

> *I was very frustrated when the lesson was over. I saw myself largely responsible for a bad lesson. I couldn't put my finger on my mistakes... I thought that if I had demonstrated how to teach the text on the college students, the student could have "mimicked" the lesson in the sixth grade class. I compared the way I trained her with how I had trained other students on her level, and they gave excellent lessons. I realized that I wasn't to blame. Maybe it was the collaborative tutoring that did a disservice to the student. I have decided not to give didactic tutoring; I would focus only on the literature. I understand that the student is only taking her first steps, that I have to be patient and persevere and train her... I believe A. was also disappointed with the lesson. When we sat down together after the lesson she said there was a conflict in our training methods, and that she had a problem when another tutor gives instructions that contradict her approach. I sensed criticism of my*

training in what she said... I didn't react, although I was offended. I have decided not to interfere in the didactic side, even if the student begs me for didactic help.

Despite everything, I'm glad for the collaborative tutoring. The student may not have given a good lesson, but I "gained" A.... I'm glad I was given the chance to get to know her a little better, and I think she's a pleasant, intelligent, and competent person. She definitely won me over.

This example reveals the teachers' differing perceptions of knowledge, of learning and teaching, of their job as teachers, and of the role of the student. It also illustrates the complexity of curriculum planning-in-action, of jointly tutoring a student, and of the connection between all these components and the moral and judgmental attitudes that accompany them.

All these subjects were discussed at length in the sessions, yet none was ever explicitly presented as a conflict of perceptions, nor were the ways in which mixed messages were simultaneously conveyed to the students by different teachers ever addressed. What is more, even this incident did not serve as the trigger for a deeper and open exploration of the conflicts among the participants.

The interpersonal conflicts were closely allied to the major intrapersonal conflict, which impacted on most of the discussions - the push and pull of change. Fear of change and imbalance was inevitably present together with the need and desire for it. For example, one of the pedagogical tutors made the following statement in the reflective discussion of the process:

I was very upset. I came to the meeting with the idea of restricting it to a limited scope, and today we opened it to a broad perspective, and that shook my confidence. Maybe to begin with we shouldn't go for something big, but limit it, so that we feel better. Another thing I suggested and that H. agreed with me on, was that it's very important for a person to feel a connection with something, and then it becomes meaningful. It doesn't matter if each of us does it a little differently.

The push and pull of change, expressly voiced here, was also hinted at on other occasions, yet it was never once discussed openly and explicitly.

On each of the issues raised, the participants' knowledge and attitudes ranged along a continuum from positivism to constructivism. Planning-in-action was a new concept for most of the group members. The majority of them had experience of linear curriculum planning in which the goals are determined in advance, along with a plan of action for achieving them, and the products are then assessed in relation to the goals. In planning in, on, and for action, however, the process is recursive. The goals are continually under discussion, while at the same time a plan of action is constructed and tried out, the products are presented, and a reflective process is carried out during, after, and for future action, while previous perceptions are challenged and existing attitudes are called into question. The discourse centers around re-examination of the goals and the critical and practical curricular issues of the members of the community, with nothing accepted as given. It might be said that the members of the community construct their own knowledge as they construct the curriculum.

Closely reading between the lines of the discussions and distilling the inter- and intrapersonal conflicts that emerged, reveals that over the course of the year, each of the participants was located somewhere along the continuum from positivism to constructivism, slowly moving from one to the other and back again.

Positivism X X X X X Constructivism

Reflection

During the year, a number of meetings were steered toward reflective thinking on the process, giving the participants the opportunity to voice their own points of view, doubts, and so on. Reflection was evident repeatedly, starting from the time at which the group started making decisions and putting them into practice. At a certain point in the decision making process, the participants began having reflective thoughts, particularly on the explicit level, but also on the implicit level.

Substance

Reflection-in-action and on-action during the planning process related primarily to practice, although it touched on the foundations of the program as well. Reflection-for-action concerned drawing conclusions and implications for the future.

In the last three sessions, the lead was again taken by the project initiator, literacy expert, and curriculum development expert in an attempt to reconstruct and sum up the process, draw conclusions, examine the ramifications, and reflect on future actions. It was at this stage that a meta-cognitive phenomenon occurred in which the curricular process itself became the subject of discussion, rather than its substance. The group members sought, in retrospect, to consider the justifications for choosing a concept in general, and the concept of "conflict" in particular, as the organizing theme, as well as to validate the curriculum developed over the course of the year in terms of its rationale, goals, programs, and products.

During one reflective discussion, two teachers conducted the following exchange in regard to a session in which a student was being tutored by several teachers:

> *Mathematics teaching tutor: For me the student was a means and not an end. What we did with her was the most interesting and significant event of the year.*
> *Literature teaching tutor: I agree with you. I think that if we had gone out into the field and I suddenly saw a student generating conflicts among the pupils, and we had filmed it and brought it back for discussion in the forum, with explanations from different professional viewpoints, it would have been most effective.*

Although the process of decision making had not been collective, recommendations for the following school year were prioritized and framed by the participants as decisions. In curricular terms, the group received the message that if it continued to act as a community of learners, it would eventually recognize how to improve the process on the basis of the lessons learned.

Pedagogical tutor: We should investigate what is happening in the field in terms of conflict. That's something I didn't understand at the beginning of the year, that genuine conflict is very intense for both sides. It's not just a difference of opinion. If the concept remains the same, it's important to modify the whole curriculum and construct it from the outset around the concept, not like we did this year.

The following example comes from a group member who was not especially active in the curricular process and was critical of the leading and decision making processes in the community:

That has nothing to do with planning, it has to do with our decision making. If the decision making had said: "Starting with your second lesson you have to make sure the students start work on an integrative project," I would have done it differently. The way it was presented, I didn't do anything, and I won't do anything next year either.

In terms of the significance of the discussion in the final stage, it appears that the conflicts between and within the group members remained intact, and the discourse was again conducted on two parallel levels. On the **explicit level**, the process was indeed summed up, and the need for the group to continue its activities was raised, along with those elements that warranted change in the future. On the **implicit level**, however, conflicts were not resolved, and the participants finished the school year still harboring conflicting perceptions and an ambivalent sense of imbalance. Group members chose the colleagues they wished to collaborate with on the basis of compatibility, resulting in differentials in the collaboration taking place this year.

Outcomes

The literature alludes to the significant benefits of collaborative learning in a professional community of teachers, both for the teachers and for the organization. The foremost advantage is in reducing the isolation of the teacher in the classroom. In addition, teachers' professional autonomy is enhanced by affording them greater control over their work and turning them, in effect, into researchers of their own professional knowledge and practice. When new insights lead to the raising of further questions, there is internal motivation for learning, making it a process that continues throughout life and focuses not only on acquiring what is already known, but also on examining what is known and constructing options for the future.

Collaboration helps teachers to assimilate innovations and apply new ideas, methods, and materials, to expand their repertoire of behaviors in the classroom, and to rethink their methods of teaching and student assessment, as well as promoting reflective decision making. A correlation has also been said to exist between teamwork and the capacity to introduce a new curriculum. In schools that operate collaboratively, teachers investigate new ideas, methods, and materials, and are able to adapt to new demands. Learning in a professional community and collaboration make the process of change less onerous. This is true both for new teachers, who are systematically offered assistance and socialized to the values and traditions of the staff, and for veteran teachers, who enjoy support in implementing changes and innovations. Similarly, it was found that in organizations displaying the features of a professional community of learners, the staff worked together and effected changes in the pedagogical methods in the classroom, and as a result the pupils were presented with more intellectually challenging learning tasks and showed better academic achievements than in traditional schools (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Hord, 1997; Olson, 1997).

Solid evidence was also found here for the effect of the planning effort on significant processes of change and learning, both for the participants and for the organization in which they operate, even beyond the timeframe in which the discourse community was active. These effects were personal, professional, and organizational. The benefits derived took different forms, with varying emphases and intensities, for each of the group members. However, they can be grouped into a number of categories, illustrated below by remarks taken from interviews conducted at the start of the following school year, several months after the community had ceased to convene.

Personal Effects

Nearly all the participants reported a sense of **belonging** and commitment to the organization that grew stronger during the course of their participation in the discourse community, as well as **personal relationships** that were formed and maintained after the cessation of its activities. In the words of one teacher:

> *My relationships with the tutors in the elementary school department became much closer. We have frequent opportunities to think and plan together.*

Similarly, the teachers spoke of closer relations that evolved because they had gotten to know each other so well, and of taking advantage of opportunities to work together and to think and consult with each other as a team. For example, another pedagogical tutor remarked: *What was created between us on the personal level won't*

go away, and the literacy expert added: *I came to feel like a member of the team and not just an outsider at the college.*

Professional Effects

A **common language** was created among the participants and became the basis for continued collaboration, both formal and informal. As one teacher stated:

> *I didn't have a clue about the terms the women used freely... It was Greek to me... It opened my eyes... and I also started using professional jargon... I learned the professional discourse that other teachers use.*

The discourse community also appears to have had a crucial effect on the design of the curriculum, and especially on teaching methods. The focus shifted to student learning, reflected both in the choice of topics and how deeply they were gone into, and in the consequent products and assessment. In the words of the literature teacher:

> *This year [the year following the community's activities] I introduced a lot of changes in my teaching methods. At least half of my lessons take place in the library and not the classroom. The girls get authentic assignments and they do them during class time using materials they find in the library.*

According to the psychology teacher:

> *Today I can take a break from the material and relate to their [the students] experiences in the field and from there frame working models. For instance, when I was teaching about the development of achievement motivation, I took contents from the field... I chose things that are relevant to the classroom... I give it very much the nature of a workshop. They test things on themselves as human beings... We analyze cases from the field...*

These examples indicate profound and significant changes in the perception of learning as a process of construction, as well as in the perception of the role of the teacher. It is important to note that three of the teachers involved had many years of experience in teaching and teacher training.

In addition, there was increased awareness of the need for **integration**, with the teachers coming to see the curriculum **holistically**, as a **total entity**. The teachers became familiar with their colleagues' curricula and gained an understanding of the context in which each subject was taught, helping them to draw connections and not leave the task of transfer to the students alone. A teacher appointed to an administrative position as a result of her participation in the discourse community stated:

> *... I hold a position this year. I'm the class coordinator, so I'm more aware of what's going on and involved with more people. I get in touch with the psychology teacher and see what she's teaching and where the interfaces are, or with D., who works with us on didactics and works on*

improving the quality of the girls' writing... with the English teacher too... and the literature teacher... we stay in touch, coordinate...

Team teaching was taking place in several subjects, with the teachers planning an integrative course and co-teaching it, in line with the model developed by the planning community. For example, a literacy tutor reported that she was now capable of applying two models to the didactics lessons she shares with the literacy expert:

One of us plans the lesson and the other chimes in. I realize now that this is integration, the incorporation of academic literacy into other subjects. That what it means to integrate bodies of knowledge.

There was also an increase in the teachers' awareness of academic writing and the possibility of getting assistance from the academic literacy experts in the college. Participation in the community affected other disciplinary teachers as well, who realized, through their interactions with the pedagogical tutors, the difficulties their students face in converting pedagogical materials into practice.

Perhaps the most important effect of the community was that the members themselves all underwent a **constructivist process of knowledge construction**, enabling them to actually implement a similar process with their students, and not just "talk about it." According to one of the teachers:

I understand the learning process better now. You don't know anything at all about something and a lot of it you draw out of yourself. Now, in view of last year's meetings, I sense what a learning process means. Sometimes I wish things were clearer, that we had clear-cut material. But I realize that it's a process that develops slowly. The emphasis is on a process of learning both for me and for the students. I feel that my teaching has become more open. I don't spoon feed the students. I've learned not to be afraid of things. I've learned how to approach an integrative subject. Opening up the process makes it possible for things to evolve. Maybe it has to do with my experience and my confidence.

A number of the participants, therefore, had come a long way from a traditional positivist approach to a constructivist attitude. Elsewhere we deal specifically with the teachers' personal and professional development, but it is important to note here that many of them stated that they had learned a great deal from the discussions and the interactions in the group. Although in the interviews, the teachers related to a variety of types of knowledge gained, they all reported leaving the experience at a different point than they had come into it.

The willingness, desire, and need for **team work** was also mentioned by members of the community, as in the following remark:

Finally, I got to know people on the staff... the relationships formed in the teams are still maintained... If, for instance, I'm working with the students on special needs kids, then I'm in touch with the special ed teachers.

All these examples demonstrate the continued existence of frameworks in which teachers get together and coordinate teaching programs, without any prodding from their superiors. These are collaborations that answer the needs and objectives of the teachers.

We have listed the effects of the planning community by categories in order to clarify the benefits. However, it must not forgotten that the individual categories are part of a total picture in which all the effects are intertwined.

Organizational Effects

In terms of implications for the organization, a number of the participants became leaders in reconstructing and reshaping a new curriculum in pedagogy and practicum. The spearheads of this change are highly aware of the need to become familiar with the syllabus in the various subjects, to consider each course in terms of the whole, to identify the interfaces, and to coordinate and draw the proper links between them.

Moreover, the elementary school department has initiated a partnership project based on the principles of a professional community of learners. Here collaboration has been established between an academic college and elementary schools.

The organization's schedule was also rearranged to enable teachers to work jointly in the classroom. Furthermore, a regular weekly learning session for each of the teams was slotted into the schedule. The make-up of the teams was determined in an effort to extend the experience gained by the professional community of learners over the entire organization, including teachers who had not taken part in the process. It would appear, however, that this step was taken prematurely, or that the teams were composed of incompatible members. Virtually all the original participants report being disappointed that the community was disbanded after only one year, and none of them consider the smaller teams to be the direct continuation of the work of the integrative planning group. As one of the group members expressed it:

> *It's over. In a certain sense, I'm sorry, because we got through the hard part and this year we could have enjoyed the fruits of our efforts. Fruits of many sorts: our expectations from the team, the nature of group decision making, knowing what is relevant to the group and what isn't. All these are fruits of our work. And then there could have been a breakthrough in the curriculum of the elementary school department. In this sense, it's as if we didn't gain anything.*

In the words of another teacher:

> *I don't feel a real continuation of the spirit of last year, because in technical terms, the integration takes the form of a single connection. It's a shame, because when you invest so many resources, so many people involved, there should be a continuation. It can't be a one-time thing. A year is too short. It's like nipping the process in the bud.*

DISCUSSION

On the surface, the group evolved as a professional discourse community, displaying features observed in previous studies, including: supportive and shared leadership; shared vision, values and norms; collective creativity; deprivatized practice; focus on student learning; and reflective dialogue (Hord, 1997; Lambert et al., 1996; Louis et al., 1996; Scribner et al., 1999).

The outcomes, both for the participants and for the organization as a whole, support the contention that training-on-the-job (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999) that moves from practice to theory and back again, and takes place in a group context, is gaining dominance in the field of teacher training, replacing traditional in-service staff development based on theories of teacher learning and focusing on development of the teacher as an individual.

From the perspective of time, the effects of the planning process indicate a significant process of learning and change, both for the group members and for the organization. However, when communities of teachers convene, issues emerge in respect to the process of negotiation regarding the agenda (Lomax, 1999), the power structure and decision making, presentation of the group's work, and discussion of the inevitable tensions between group vs. individual objectives and conflicting views. These problems exist even when the members are not cognizant of them. The question of whether or not they rise to the surface and the manner in which they are discussed largely determine the character of the group and generate, or hinder, the possibility of long-term productive work (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Thus, as shown by other studies as well, collaboration through a reflective process, in which teachers consider their actions and challenge their values, is no simple matter, and unavoidably leads to conflict. Although the tensions that emerge in collaborative relationships are what keep these relationships alive and dynamic, they also raise questions to which there are no simple or definitive answers (Hord, 1997; Olson, 1997).

This is even more salient in the case of integrative curriculum planning-in-action, based on constructivist principles. It is a difficult and complex process that demands openness, flexibility, commitment, and considerable courage from the teachers involved (Levin & Nevo, 1998). As this process was a new scenario for the majority of the teachers participating in the discourse community, it indeed generated knowledge construction that led to changes in existing practice. A process of this sort leaves considerable room for the subjective interpretations of the group members and their contextual implementations in their specific subjects, and thus for individual decision making in tune with each teacher's knowledge, abilities, desires, and considerations in the context of his or her own courses. In a traditional planning process the goals are presented in advance, an appropriate plan of action is determined, and the products are assessed. In contrast, throughout the process of curriculum planning-in-action the goals are re-examined, plans of action are devised, and products are produced. This creates a situation that impedes the formulation of definitive group decisions applying to all members. Rather, it leaves decision making to each individual, according to his or her own considerations and capacity to cope with imbalance, and allows for changes to be made throughout the course of action as befitting the specific context in which the individual operates.

Stein et al. (1999) claim that a community can only be built around an articulated vision of what it stands for. In our case, this was not clear-cut. There were conflicts between the teachers' visions of the group's role and the experts' visions of

what their goals should be. Even within the group, there were debates around the focus of the design process, as evident from the comments of the mathematics teaching tutor, for example, who claimed that "us" is important, meaning the group members and not "the students." Her vision was to first create a caring, collaborative group of teachers, rather than to focus on student needs. Yet participating in a shared set of activities was the glue that held the community together. In that sense, the group described in this paper was a true "professional community," displaying the attributes outlined by Louis et al. (1996) and Lambert et al. (1996).

The community of learners here, revealing a flat pyramid in most sessions, constituted a source of support for the teachers and allowed them to make personal decisions at various stages of the process and in respect to a variety of issues. Consequently, the community significantly enhanced the autonomy of some of the teachers, while at the same time causing anxiety and distress to those who had difficulty in adapting to the dynamic changes, flexibility and commitment that was demanded of them. Thus, whereas the flat pyramid and openness of the process empowered some teachers, it constrained others, as well as somewhat hindering collective decision making. A process of this sort makes unfamiliar demands on the teachers and requires a high degree of daring and willingness for change, as it relentlessly challenges the participants' basic assumptions, perceptions, knowledge, and abilities. While it may enhance the teachers' autonomy, it also places weighty responsibility on their shoulders, which is sometimes difficult for them to accept and therefore intimidating.

In the professional community of learners, this complexity generated a discourse conducted on two levels: the explicit level on which the community discussed the essential curricular issues; and the implicit level, where inter- and intrapersonal conflicts between the participants were expressed. Below the surface, on the implicit level, there were indications that this group of planners-learners did not fulfill its potential.

Several explanations may be suggested for the two parallel processes that emerged. First, it is possible that in a prolonged and complex procedure, during which the participants are concerned with what is happening, and will happen tomorrow morning, in their classrooms, there is a tendency to deal with day-to-day practice and immediate practical solutions, making it difficult for the group members to turn their attention to analysis of the process itself.

Another explanation might stem from the fact that teaching is a profession with a well-established norm of not interfering in the attitudes of others. Intense ongoing collaboration on the subject of the curriculum and teaching methods represents a radical departure from tradition, a change that may be hard for some to make.

Furthermore, it is likely that a planning process of this sort, which is, for the most part, new to the participants, requires more time. Planning-in-action, constant construction of knowledge, and integrative planning all demand that one forego previous knowledge, class time, and the perception of teaching contents, and thus may all require a maturation period longer than a single school year.

In addition, the first stage of the process, in which the goals were presented and defined, may have been too short, and did not include a thorough discussion of the foundations of the curriculum and the participants' existing understandings. As a result, in all following meetings, up until the final stage, the members continued to clarify, question, and debate the group's goals. Thus clear-cut group decisions as to the definition of the goals and the foundations of the curriculum seem to have been lacking.

Had they been formulated in the initial stages, it might later have saved the group endless repetitions and continual questioning of the goals.

Furthermore, the initial perceptions, knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs of the participants were never openly discussed or fully explored at any stage in the process, a fact that seems to have given rise to the implicit contents that eddied below the surface throughout the year. Conflicts were not resolved until the final stage of activities. One might wonder why the group did not take advantage of its inherent potential for open, honest, and probing discussion to examine the members' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs in regard to the issues it considered. One explanation might be found in the lack of a single group leader to direct the process and assist the participants in bringing their conflicts and apprehensions out into the light of day, so that they could become conscious of them and could analyze them and understand their significance. A further explanation might be that the group chose not to open a "Pandora's box" of inter- and intrapersonal conflicts, which might have crippled the process and made it impossible for them to carry out the planning for which they had convened. Israeli cultural norms might also have been at work here, causing the participants to "sidestep" conflicts and disagreements. Rather than placing such issues on the table for open discussion, Israelis would typically prefer to pretend they did not exist, lest they should cloud relations with their colleagues. Finally, it is feasible that some of the participants were totally unaware of the inter- and intrapersonal conflicts in the group.

To conclude, we believe that investigation of the nature of a professional community of teachers' teachers and its effects on the personal and professional development of its members, as well as on the organization, would do well to explore the following issues more thoroughly:

- Is a top-down or bottom-up hierarchy preferable?
- Should group leaders focus only on explicit curricular issues, or should they also strive to bring to the surface the conflicts and apprehensions of the participants?
- How can a culture of collaborative inquiry as the stance of a teachers training institution be fostered, and how can a professional community contribute to this endeavor?
- What does curriculum planning-in-action mean in different situations in the educational institution?
- What is the effect of a professional community of teachers developing-in-action on the quality of the training afforded student teachers?

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Curriculum planning process: In-, on- and for-action

Components and Aspects

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Curriculum planning components →	Goals	Decision making	Reflection
Curricular discourse aspects ↓ **Substance** Areas and issues	**Pre-planned goals:** Discourse community; integration; literacy. **Emerging goals:** knowledge construction; assessment alternatives	**Goals** ↔ **Critical issues** disciplinary curriculum ↔ integrative curriculum traditional assessment ↔ open and flexible alternatives literacy as expertise ↔ cooperation ↔ literacy within disciplines	• Practice • Program's rationale • Implications and suggestions for future plans
Syntax **Explicit (open)** • Flow of information management • manner of curricular planning development • group interactions	Initiator, experts and teachers lead the process Clarify goals and concepts	Top-down hierarchy ↔ Bottom-up hierarchy Theoretical knowledge ↔ Practical knowledge From previous experience ↘ ↙ emerging Translating goals into practice Making group versus individual decisions Collaboration inside and outside group	Personal Collective
Implicit (hidden)	Re-examine goals in accordance with practice Create personal priorities	Development of inter- and intra-personal conflicts concerning perceptions, beliefs, perspectives **Positivism** → **Constructivism**	

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